

**PRESS RELEASE**12<sup>th</sup> July 2004**GLOBAL WARMING: bleak prospects mean a more hazardous world**

Seven years after the Kyoto Conference on Climate Change and three years on from publication of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Third Assessment Report, prospects for tackling climate change look increasingly bleak. This is the conclusion to a report published today by the Benfield Hazard Research Centre entitled '*Climate Change 2004*' which addresses the results of research undertaken and observations made since 2000.

The Kyoto Protocol requires that greenhouse gas emissions are reduced to 5.2 percent below 1990 levels within the 2008 – 2012 period. In actual fact they have already risen by 10 percent. Atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations have risen more in the last three decades than in the previous three centuries. The rate of increase itself is also on the rise. During the 1980s and 1990s, concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide rose by an average of 1.5 ppm a year. In both 2002 and 2003, however, the level has risen by 2.5 ppm.

All the evidence points to rapidly accelerating global temperatures, with the 15 hottest years on record occurring since 1980, the 10 hottest since 1990 and the five hottest since 1997. The Earth is now hotter than at any time in at least the last 400,000 years and worst case scenarios now visualise temperatures rising by a staggering 7 to 10 degrees C by the end of the century.

The report's author, Professor Bill McGuire, Benfield Professor of Geohazards and Director of the Benfield Hazard Research Centre says:

"There is now no question that hothouse Earth will be a far more hazardous place, with extreme meteorological events – in particular floods, drought, wildfires and heat waves - becoming more and more commonplace. In the year 2000, 1 in 30 of the global population was affected by natural hazards. By 2100, it is not impossible that climate-related natural hazards will impinge upon the lives of everyone on the planet.

"Nowhere in either the industrialised countries or the developing world is likely to escape the hazardous consequences of accelerating warming, with urban centres in coastal locations and on rivers being particularly at risk. The insurance industry must be prepared to face progressively rising losses as extreme river and coastal flood events become increasingly commonplace.

"The signs are that we have passed the critical point beyond which we cannot prevent significant warming nor avoid its increasingly hazardous consequences. Lack of progress in stabilising greenhouse gas emissions now makes it likely that we will be unable to mitigate the worst effects of warming and it seems ever more probable that we will have to consider short-term technological fixes such as the underground storage (sequestration) of carbon dioxide."

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**Notes to Editors:**

**About Benfield Hazard Research Centre:**

With over fifty researchers and practitioners, Benfield Hazard Research Centre is Europe's leading multidisciplinary academic hazard research centre. BHRC comprises three groups: Geological Hazards, Meteorological Hazards & Seasonal Forecasting, and Disaster Studies & Management. The Centre is based at University College London, one of the world's leading universities and, along with Oxford and Cambridge, one of the UK's top three multi-faculty teaching and research institutions.

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